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AUTHOR	Brown, Robert G.
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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship of perceptual theory and methodology to teacher effectiveness. Criterion and comparison groups were formed. The criterion group contained 24 elementary and 24 secondary teachers who had been past finalists in the United States Jaycee "Outstanding Young Educator" competition. The comparison group of 24 elementary and 24 secondary teachers were randomly selected from the south Florida area. All subjects completed open-end questionnaires on classroom management, instructional objectives and procedures, and self evaluation. Three judges, trained in perceptual theory, then rated the subjects on eight perceptual theories. After reviewing the verbal reports, the judges made inferences on the subjects' characteristic beliefs in the following categories: (a) general frame of reference; (b) perception of self; (d) the purpose and process of learning; and (e) perceptions of appropriate methods. A group of lay judges also reviewed the protocols and rated subjects: above agerage, average, or below average. The results were statistically appraised by the Median Test, Discriminant Function Analysis, and Veldman's ANOVAR 23 program. Two tables and 12 references are included. (BRB)

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A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTUAL ORGANIZATION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY "OUTSTANDING YOUNG EDUCATORS"

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Robert G. Brown

Florida Atlantic University

Despite the tremendous number of attempts made by researchers to establish a dependable set of criteria for effective teaching, these studies as a group have not been definitive. A comprehensive review by Getzels and Jackson (1963) of much of this literature indicated that a theoretical basis for effective teaching was missing. Others, (Smith, 1962; Ryans, 1963; Anderson and Hunka, 1963) also referred to a need for such a theoretical frame of reference. A. W. Combs, at the University of Florida, has supplied a theoretical basis and methodology for research in the area of teacher effectiveness which has been productive beyond expectations. In his book, The Professional Education of Teachers (1965, p. 9), Combs suggested that a primary flaw in previous approaches had its origin in researchers' attempts to seek correlates between teacher effectiveness and specific methods and competencies, which taken alone, are inadequate and misleading data.

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Combs and his colleagues have employed a perceptual or internal frame of reference, working from observations and projective data, as opposed to overt behavior, in an effort to uncover relationships among effective teachers' central beliefs about themselves and their work (Gooding, 1964; Usher, 1966; Vonk, 1970; and Brown, 1970). Each of the above studies offered support for the nature and importance of the totality of perceptions known as the perceptual field, as articulated by Combs and Snygg (1959, pp. 20-21) as well as clearly demonstrating the relationship between perceptual organization and teacher effectiveness.

Method

Whereas previous perceptual studies related to effective teaching involved local populations of "good" and "poor" teachers as nominated by either supervisors, administrators, or students, the present investigation sought and employed a national population of exceptional teachers. This population consisted of persons who had been repeatedly recognized as exceptional teachers by professional educators, civic leaders, and lay persons. These teachers were compared with a random group of in-service teachers who were taking graduate courses at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). By employing the most predictive aspects of previous perceptual studies and the above groups, it was hoped to accomplish the most comprehensive test to date of perceptual theory and methodology with regard to the question of the nature of teacher effectiveness. Specifically, the design called for differentiations

between exceptional teachers and those reflecting the full range of teaching abilities. The criterion group (OYE) was established by random selection among the national finalists from the past five years of the United States Jaycee Outstanding Young Educator competition. The original nominations of the 24 elementary and 24 secondary teachers had come from a variety of sources, i.e. parents, students, administrators, colleagues, and supervisors, and were subsequently judged in local and state eliminations before becoming eligible for membership in the research population. The comparison group (FAU) were South Florida teachers who were also selected randomly, and also consisted of 24 elementary and 24 secondary teachers. Whereas the OYE group of teachers were in no case over thirty five, age was not a factor in the selection of the comparison group. It was observed after the random selection of the research population that the two groups were quite compatible with regard to age. Neither group contained anyone who was not currently employed as a full time classroom teacher. Thus the total research population consisted of 96 teacher subjects. Research protocols were gathered from each group. These protocols were made up of responses to open-ended questions having to do with: (1) Classroom Management, (2) Instructional Objectives and Procedures, and (3) Self-evaluation. The responses were typed and coded by a confidential secretary and then distributed to three judges trained in perceptual theory. These trained judges read the anonymous protocols and rated the subjects on eight perceptual hypotheses theorized to

differentiate between the groups. It was the assigned task of the judges to look "behind" the verbal reports of the subjects and make inferences as to the subjects' characteristic beliefs in the following categories:

A. General Frame of Reference

B. Perceptions About What People Are Like and How They Behave

C. The Teachers' Perception of Self

D. The Purpose and Process of Learning

E. Perceptions of Appropriate Methods

Hypotheses

Specific descriptions of the perceptual dimensions corresponding with the above categories were drawn from previous perceptual studies or designed for the present study, and were bipolarly stated so as to facilitate judging on a five-point rating scale. The hypotheses held that the judging would establish that the Outstanding Young Educator (OYE) subjects would be rated higher or more positively on the following continua than would be the in-service teacher graduate student (FAU) group:

A. GENERAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

1. Hopeful - Despairing. The teacher's frame of reference includes the feeling of general optimism. He believes that all mankind possesses a potential for growth. He feels optimistic rather than pessimistic over temporary or situational setbacks.

(Previously untested)

B. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE ARE LIKE AND HOW THEY BEHAVE

1. Worthy - Unworthy. The teacher sees others as possessing a dignity and integrity which must be respected at all times rather than seeing others as being unimportant, lacking integrity, and whose dignity may be violated at will.

(Gooding, 1964; also Usher, 1966)

2. Unthreatening - Threatening. The teacher believes in a basic goodness of man. He feels that he and his fellows are most content and fully functioning when accepted and appreciated; therefore, he sees hostility and aggressiveness as antithetic to growth.

(Previously untested)

C. THE TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF SELF

1. With People - Apart from People. The teacher sees himself as a part of all mankind, as identified with people and with groups, rather than as apart, removed, withdrawn, or alienated from others.

(Gooding, 1964; also Usher, 1966)

2. Certain, Sure - Doubting. The teacher knows who he is and what he stands for. He feels more positively that his beliefs are in accord with his actions and vice versa, than one plagued with recurring self-doubts and uncertainties with regard to his genuine feelings and commitments.

(Previously untested)

D. THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF LEARNING

1. Having Broad - Narrow Purposes. The teacher has purposes that go beyond the specific particulars of the situation and on to larger implications and contexts. He considers the immediate problem as it relates to the global situation. He is concerned about broad perspective and long-term effects rather than preoccupied with detail and immediate results.

(Vonk, 1970)

2. Facilitator - Evaluator. The teacher views his task as one of accounting for and understanding student needs, and facilitating their discovery of new needs which will contribute to their overall growth. He sees himself as a healer, facilitator, as opposed to one who regards himself fundamentally as an evaluator, appraiser, or director of untrained minds.

(Previously untested)

E. PERCEPTIONS OF APPROPRIATE METHODS

1. Active - Passive Learning. The teacher perceives student growth as a function of finding personal meaning; therefore, he believes that he must enable his students to see themselves as free, able to initiate and question. Being keenly involved with the perceptions of his students he does not routinely impose structure, focus on external authority, or inhibit the perceptual experience of his students.

(Previously untested)

As an additional validity check, lay judges, naive to the design of the study, were asked to read the research protocols and to simply rate the subjects: Above Average, Average, or Below Average.

Procedure

The total group of typed protocols was packaged randomly into six groups of 16 each, to gether with an equal number of data rating sheets. Judges were given one package to judge each week for six consecutive weeks. After each judging interval of 16 completed protocols, a check was made to insure the interjudge reliability met an established minimum requirement of 75 percent agreement within a two-point limit. In this study the reliabilities ranged from .8046 to .8829.

Results

The hypothesized relationship between the teacher effectiveness criterion group and the eight perceptual dimensions was appraised statistically using the Median Test and each hypothesis was positively and significantly related. The series of Median Tests yielded differences ranging in significance from the .0005 level of confidence to the .0001 level, and all the hypotheses were found to be highly predictive of the criterion.

Though each hypothesis was significantly related to teacher effectiveness, two were much more associated with the criterion than the others. These were Certain, Sure vs. Doubting and Facilitator vs. Evaluator. The combined Elementary and Secondary OYE population gave strong evidence of having perceptual organizations characterized by a view of self reflecting confidence and trust in themselves and their beliefs and, furthermore, viewing their task as providing help to students in facilitating ways.

Possible interaction effects were sought by incorporating Discriminant Function Analysis and using Veldman's ANOVAR 23 program. It was found that the total variance was extracted by one root, or the first discriminant (Table 1). Additional evidence is seen for the potency of the perceptual dimension Certain, Sure vs. Doubting in differentiating exceptional teachers from less distinguished teachers.

TABLE 1

DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION ANALYSIS OF OYE AND FAU GROUPS BY HYPOTHESES AND DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION VARIABLES

Hypotheses	Correlation with Discriminant Variables	F-Ratio
1. Hopeful vs. Despairing	.6365	15.41 *
2. Worthy vs. Unworthy	.6381	15.51 *
3. Unthreatening vs. Threatening	.7072	19.79 **
4. With People vs. Apart from People	.6365	15.41 *
5. Certain, Sure vs. Doubting	.9258	39.91 **
6. Broad vs. Narrow Purposes	.7421	22.36 **
7. Facilitator vs. Evaluator	.7799	25.22 **
8. Active vs. Passive Methods	.7072	19.79 **

Root 1 100 percent of variance
Chi Square = 38.887, D.F. = 8 p. < .0001
OYE = 48 subjects; FAU = 48 subjects

* p. < .0005
** p. < .0001

When the data were regrouped by elementary and secondary criterion and comparison groups it was again found by discriminant analysis that the same criteria were predictive for identifying exceptional elementary and secondary teachers (Table 2).

TABLE 2

DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION ANALYSIS OF OYE ELEMENTARY, OYE SECONDARY, FAU ELEMENTARY, AND FAU SECONDARY GROUPS BY HYPOTHESES AND DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION VARIABLES

	Hypotheses	Correlation with Discriminant Variables[a]	F-Ratio
1.	Hopeful vs. Despairing	.7476	8.5184 **
2.	Worthy vs. Unworthy	.6502	6.5345 +
3.	Unthreatening vs. Threatening	.6731	7.0113 *
4.	With People vs. Apart from People	.6444	6.9756 *
5.	Certain, Sure vs. Doubting	.9321	14.1475 **
6.	Broad vs. Narrow Purposes	.7617	9.1895 **
7.	Facilitator vs. Evaluator	.8168	10.5101 **
8.	Active vs. Passive Methods	.7555	9.5921 **

Root 1	72 percent of variance, Chi Square = 40.587, D.F. = 10 p.$\angle$.0001
Root 2	16 percent of variance, not significant
Root 3	10 percent of variance, not significant

\+ p. $\angle$ .001
* p. $\angle$ .0005
** p. $\angle$ .0001
[a]These correlations relate only to the first discriminant. Loadings on Roots 2 and 3 were not computed as they were not significant

In an effort to determine if the eight hypotheses would differentiate elementary teachers from secondary teachers when the criterion group was diluted by the inclusion of the comparison group, additional Median Tests were performed. Elementary teachers of the combined populations

appeared to have a general frame of reference more optimistic and hopeful, to see hostility as inhibiting to student growth more so than judged characteristic of secondary teachers, and to see methods which facilitate the exploration of personal meaning from the students' point of view as superior, more characteristically than their secondary teacher colleagues.

The nonparametric nature of the combined research data required separate treatment of the groups for analysis of variance. This was done to appraise the way and extent the elementary and secondary teachers contributed to the previous findings. Single classification analysis of variance done with the comparison or FAU group data yielded no hypothesis that was more descriptive of one group than the other, thus the differences cited above were principally oriented in the OYE group data.

In the manner above, the comparison or OYE group was compared by analysis of variance and it was established that in the outstanding or exceptional teacher group, the elementary teachers could be differentiated from the secondary teachers principally by hypothesis three, Unthreatening vs. Threatening ($p. < .0065$) and to a leaser but still significant degree by the dimensions: Worthy vs. Unworthy, ($p. < .0166$), With People vs. Apart from People, ($p. < .0182$), Broad vs. Narrow Purposes, ($p. < .0227$), and Facilitator vs. Evaluator, ($p. < .0180$).

In addition to the above findings it was interesting to note that though their task was different and less complex than that of the perceptual

judges, the untrained judges were able to differentiate the criterion group from the group of in-service teacher graduate students at better than the .004 level of confidence, and furthermore, they were in high agreement with the trained judges as to which of the subjects were most effective.

Discussion

The present study clearly established that the effective teachers differed from less effective teachers in regard to their General Frame of Reference, Their Perceptions of Self, Their Perceptions of the Purpose and Process of Learning, and Their Perceptions of Appropriate Methods. Each perceptual hypothesis was established to be descriptive of effective teachers. This information holds a number of implications for personalizing teacher training which has been discussed by Brown (1970).

Regarding group differences it can be said that the elementary teachers gave evidence of more interpersonal openness and saw methods which allowed students to actively explore their own best ways of finding solutions through teacher facilitation more positively than was characteristic of secondary teachers as a group. Both elementary and secondary effective teachers reflected authenticity and personal involvement with their task and students. A remote and valueless role appears not to be related to good teaching. Discriminant analysis which is mathematically similar to factor analysis (Nunnally, 1967, p. 339) suggested that the perceptual organization of the effective teachers of this study was characterized by Authentic Purposes.

Of further interest, even lay persons were able to accurately detect the authenticity and compatibility between beliefs and methodology characteristic of effective teachers. The naive judges of the present study clearly established their ability to detect the distinguished teachers. This finding raises the question if lay persons in the general population are consistently accurate in their appraisals of effective vs. less effective teacher behavior. One wonders if the lay judges of this investigation did not themselves employ a perceptual frame of reference as did the trained judges in their selections. If these questions can be answered affirmatively it suggests strongly that even lay judges through the use of projective protocols can make more accurate differentiations regarding quality teaching than can be done with most of our more sophisticated self-report and observational techniques.

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